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AUTHOR Green, Robert L.
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ABSTRACT

Until the schools are desegregated, and children from different racial backgrounds are brought together, we cannot hope for an egalitarian society. In a multiracial school environment, children can be taught to respect the attitudes, values, and life styles of others. However, the schools must not only be desegregated in name only, but there must also be mutual interaction between students of different racial backgrounds. In addition, provided that teachers do not consider minority group children intellectually retarded, these children will profit academically from attending a multiracial school, while white students will not suffer. Teacher attitudes and behavior are also important in dealing with discipline problems in a desegregated school. Educational leaders must be committed both politically and ideologically and use their skills to obtain a nationwide egalitarian multiracial school system. They must recognize that their roles are political as well as educational when it comes to such issues as busing students. If positive steps are taken, educational desegregation will lead to the development of an egalitarian multiracial society. (Author/MC)

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MULTIRACIAL SCHOOLS*

Robert L. Green**

My philosophy of education is related to a statement made by John Amos Comenius in The Great Didactic in 1632. Comenius wrote:

> The education I propose includes all that is proper for a man, and is one in which all men who are born into this world would share....Our first wish is that all men should be educated fully to full humanity; not only one individual, not a few, not even many, but all men together and single, young and old, rich and poor...men and women....[1]

As an educator, I am personally committed to the goal of creating an egalitarian multiracial society in this country. Therefore, my philosophy of education rests on three assumptions:

1) that multiracial schools provide optimal conditions on which to build an egalitarian multiracial society;

2) that school segregation is detrimental to the educational and psychological development of majority and minority children; and

3) that multiracial schools are effective settings for teaching attitudes and behavior essential to dissolving and reducing racial tension.[2]

It is ludicrous to think about creating an egalitarian multiracial society, however, while our schools remain segregated. In the past it was

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** Robert L. Green is acting dean of the College of Urban Development and director of the Center for Urban Affairs at Michigan State University.

[1] Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House, 1970).

[2] Robert L. Green, et al., "The Sociology of Multiracial Schools," Inequality in Education, No. 9, August 3, 1971.

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thought that desegregation was a problem confined to the South, but it is not. Desegregation is a problem we are grappling with on a national scale. This problem is now apparent in all sections of the country from Detroit in the North to Richmond and Memphis in the South, from Boston in the East to Denver in the West. Until we desegregate our schools, bringing together children from different racial backgrounds, we cannot hope for an egalitarian multiracial society. No child, black or white, can be prepared for a multiracial world if he is brought up in a segregated school.

Researchers have found that racially identifiable schools, whether they are all white or all black, have harmful effects on the achievements, self-concepts and attitudes of all students. In addition, racial isolation in the schools fosters attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate isolation, which then affects other important areas of life. Whites who attend racially isolated schools often develop unrealistic self-concepts, hate, fear, and suspicions, and other attitudes that alienate them from minorities.[3] But in a multiracial school environment, children can be taught to respect the attitudes, the values, and the life styles of individuals who are perceived as being different from what is traditionally seen in a uniracial or segregated school.

There is a difference, however, between merely desegregating our schools and creating a school in which students of varying racial backgrounds are found and a mutual interaction between them occurs. "A totally integrated school must include more than biracial enrollment. Open and

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[3] Preston Wilcox, "Education for Black Humanism: A Way of Approaching It," in Nathan Wright, Jr. (Ed.), What Black Educators Are Saying (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1970), p. 7.

positive communication at all social and educational levels is paramount in overcoming the complex problems related to the transition from segregated to integrated education."[4] Mutual interaction between all segments of the student population is necessary if meaningful, social and academic learning is to occur.[5]

Much of what we read about desegregated schools today focuses primarily on two levels: achievement and discipline.

Achievement

Many researchers support the point of view that in general the inferior educational opportunities available to minority youngsters prohibits them from achieving at the academic level of children who attend schools in more affluent districts.[6] It has been noted that a large percentage of the black children graduating from our public schools in recent years is in the category of functional illiterates, that is, they are unable to read at the sixth grade level.[7] In operational terms this means they have trouble reading and comprehending the daily newspaper.

On the other hand, minority group children profit academically when they attend a multiracial school while white students do not

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[4] Robert Lee Green, "After School Integration--What? Problems in Social Learning," Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. IXLIV, No. 7, March 1966.

[5] Ibid.

[6] See Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House, 1970); Christopher Jencks, Inequality (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972); and Robert L. Green, "Northern School Desegregation: Educational, Legal and Political Issues," to be published in the 1974 Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education.

[7] M. Lee Montgomery, "The Education of Black Children," in Nathan Wright, Jr. (Ed.), What Black Educators Are Saying (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1970), p. 48.

experience any decline in academic achievement and often improve their achievement levels. Alexander Plante of the Connecticut Department of Education cited his research in testimony before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity. Plante's research showed that urban children in multiracial school settings "achieve more optimally in classes with mixed enrollments." Plante's data also show that there is no difference in achievement levels of middle income children attending multiracial schools and those attending all white middle income schools.[8] The California Supreme Court in the Wakefield decision upheld the right of the San Francisco Board of Education to assign students to specific schools. The court stated: "Integration of the public schools, presenting prospects of raising the level of educational achievement of blacks without harming that of whites, may serve to overcome inequality of educational opportunity and to make possible that acquaintance and companionship necessary to break down racial stereotypes and prevent racial prejudice."[9] Data has also shown that when youngsters are placed in school systems in which teachers appreciate the educational process and place a premium on learning, rapid gains can be made in educational achievement. All youngsters--white and minority--tend to profit from the experience.

A crucial stage in bringing about meaningful social learning between white and black students is during the transitional period when

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[8] "Segregation and Early Education," testimony of Alexander Plante before U.S. Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, May 5, 1970, reported in Integrated Education, May-June 1971, p. 51.

[9] "The Wakefield Decision," Integrated Education, March-April 1971, pp. 35-39.

black students are first introduced into a formerly all white school, or vice versa.[10] Some black children may experience difficulty in meeting the educational standards of the new school when desegregation first occurs. Attempting to cope with this problem, many educators group youngsters on the basis of their measured achievement level on nationally standardized tests. When this is done one finds within such schools a special class for slow learners which in many cases is simply an all minority class. Rather than regarding these youngsters as being educationally "behind," teachers frequently perceive them as being intellectually retarded and, therefore, incapable of benefiting from new and meaningful school experiences. Consequently, what is initially planned as school desegregation results in intraschool de facto segregation.[11] When this segregation occurs, we find that white students tend to regard minority students as being different while minority students (often black or Spanish-speaking) perceive themselves as being different since they are in special classes. Intraschool de facto segregation on the academic level leads to other forms of segregation, i.e., students who attend classes together are more likely to become friends with youngsters in their own classrooms and these friendships are apt to be carried over to cafeteria, library situations, athletic events, and school assemblies.[12]

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[10] Robert Lee Green, "After School Integration--What?"

[11] F. Riessman, "Integration: The Key to Quality Education for All," in Robert L. Green (Ed.), After School Integration--What?

[12] Robert Lee Green, "After School Integration--What?"

Discipline

Websters Dictionary defines discipline as "training that corrects, molds or perfects the mental faculties or moral character...control gained by enforcing obedience or order." Discipline emerges as a problem in desegregated schools when unhealthy forces (which sometimes are hidden or not so visible) exist in a school system. For example, inappropriate teacher behavior can be a "not so visible force" that leads to discipline problems.

About two weeks ago I participated in a desegregation workshop for teachers in Atlanta, Georgia. In that workshop a teacher asked me how one should handle a discipline problem between black and white youngsters. I indicated that the best approach is to deal with the forces that are related to that problem long before it becomes a "discipline problem." For example, no teacher should tolerate a white youngster referring to a black youngster in a derogatory manner, whether that teacher is black or white. By the same token, no teacher should permit a black youngster to refer to a white youngster in a derogatory manner.[13]

Very often in newly desegregated settings black youngsters have complained that white youngsters are snobbish and tend to flaunt their favored socioeconomic status over them. White students have complained that some black youngsters are aggressive and they push and shove them around. But sometimes a push or shove on the part of a black student is a reaction or an attempt to cope with a snub or a pointed remark from a

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[13] Larry Adcock, "Beating, Years of Hate Spur Racial Violence in Pontiac," Detroit Free Press, October 9, 1970.

white student. A hostile glance can lead to a shove. However, the key factor in handling the problem is for teachers to assume leadership roles in the classroom. They must demonstrate to the youngsters that they are fair to all students.

Teacher behavior is also important in dealing with the desegregated school. Voluntary group segregation does not necessarily decrease even though minority group students are consistent members of the school population. If youngsters observe that all white teachers are sitting together in one corner of the cafeteria and all the black teachers are sitting together in another corner, the students are provided with a model of segregation. But if the teachers communicate and cooperate with each other they can more readily use their own behavior as an example for the students to follow.[14]

In the past educators have been reluctant to take a stand on crucial social problems although their own behaviors, as evident in the Detroit desegregation case, has led to segregated school districts. Educators were just as responsible as state officials for creating a de jure segregated school system in Detroit. In that case the school board was cited for the part it played through the years in promoting school segregation through policies and practices which deliberately built on rather than negated segregated housing patterns. Judge Roth found the school board guilty of the following practices:

> The board has created and altered attendance zones, maintained and altered grade structures, and created and altered feeder school patterns in a manner which has had a natural, probable, and actual effect of continuing black and white pupils in racially segregated

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[14] Robert Lee Green, "After School Integration--What?"

> schools....Throughout the last decade (and presently) school attendance zones of opposite racial composition have been separated by north-south boundary lines despite the Board's awareness (since at least 1962) that drawing boundaries in an east-west direction would result in significant integration....There has never been a feeder pattern or zoning change which placed a predominantly white residential area into a predominantly black school zone or feeder pattern.[15]

I hope that members of this educational institute will continue to look for ways to openly support an egalitarian multiracial school system on a national basis and use their leadership skills to obtain the latter goal. All people in our society must begin to commit themselves both politically and ideologically to multiracialism. We are all aware that there have been inequities in the past and we must work from there. But first, people must admit that an egalitarian society is the one in which they want to live. Through continuous ongoing formal workshops and seminars we can try to understand and to know each other. For too long blacks and whites and other minorities have been separated by race, class and religion. Therefore, you cannot expect people to come together without the biases and attitudes which have been learned. We must also have seminars and workshops with minority and majority pupils before desegregation occurs in order to prepare them for multiracial school experiences. It is also important for school boards to give leadership and take public positions on issues that are aimed at the welfare of all students and not take stands only on popular issues. In addition, administrators have to acknowledge that their roles are political as well as educational. For example, the decision of whether or not to bus students is a political decision, not an educational decision. If positive

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[15] Bradley et al. v. Milliken, Civ. No. 35257 (E.D. Mich., June 16, 1971), p. 11.

steps are sought to overcome the biases of the past, it will soften the effects of educational desegregation which will help to develop an egalitarian multiracial society.